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THE

WOMAN THAT WAS A CAT.

A METAMORPHOSIOLOGICAL SKETCH,

IN ONE ACT.

ADAPTED FROM

La Chatte Métamorphosée en Femme,

BY

EUGENE SCRIBE.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A CAT.

Originally presented at the Theatre du Gymnase Dramatique, March 3, 1827. *An English version called "Puss," was performed at the Princesses Theatre, October*, 1859.

CHARACTERS.

WALTER THULE, (*a student and a misanthrope.*)	Mr. Shore.
JOHN MORITZ, (*alias Rambo Sambo, an Indian juggler.*) . .	Mr. Garden.
MINNIE GRESCHEN, (*Walter's cousin.*)	Miss L. Keeley.
MARTHA, (*his housekeeper.*) . .	Mrs. Weston.

SCENE AND COSTUMES.—German, about 1750.

WALTER.—Grey frock trimmed with black velvet, black trunk breeches, grey stockings, high shoes.

MORITZ.—Black long gaberdine shawl round waist, high black Persian hat.

MINNIE.—Plain white dress.

MARTHA.—Coloured gown, apron, German cap, long earrings.

Time in performance, 40 *minutes.*

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THE WOMAN THAT WAS A CAT.

SCENE.—*An ancient oak apartment, in Munich.—At back,* R. C., *an alcove, with small raised lattice window, against which is a small bed, hidden by two curtains.*—R, *a table, on which is a small box or coffer, above table a cage hanging against the wall;* D. R., D. L.

MARTHA *is seated at table knitting, a white cat sleeping on her lap.*

MARTHA. Master does not return. Poor Walter! hunting vainly for a friend—he who, in his prosperity, had so many—not one left to us, except poor Minnie here, and I must now part with her. Herr Schnapp's cook has offered me ten shillings for her; and I refused, for her fur alone is worth all the money, to say nothing of her amiable disposition! Yet I shall be obliged to accept the offer, for poor Minnie pines for her daily ha'porth of meat, which we are now too poor to buy. Ah, Minnie! it is not you who is to be pitied; it is I! for I am so fond of you, and I can boldly say, as an honest woman, that since the death of my husband, it is the only attachment in which I have allowed myself to indulge. (*rising and going to the bed, on which she places the sleeping cat*) The female heart must always have some object to love—while we are young, that object is a young man—when we grow old it is a cat—and yet cats are treacherous animals, deceiving those who cherish them, and that is why we like them, perhaps, as they remind us so much of our former lovers. (*leaves one curtain of bed open, the other concealing the cat from view—knocking at door,* L.)

WALTER. (*without*) Martha! Martha!

MARTHA. Oh! here's master—he must not know I am about to sell Minnie; for he loves her so that he would starve himself to feed her. (*goes to, and opens* L. D.)

WALTER *entering.*

WALTER. Ah! at last! I began to think that you also had a mind to keep me outside the door.

MARTHA. (R.) I was afraid I should awake Minnie.

WALTER. (L., *mournfully*) Poor pussy! she sleeps—she acts wisely! I wish I was asleep, always asleep! In the first place, those who sleep dine, and that is economical; and next, we behold not men's faces, and in my present misanthropical state, I cannot endure to look upon them.

MARTHA. Ah! you have then obtained nothing from your father's debtors?

WALTER. Oh, yes, everything—except money! some could not at all recollect me—others had met with sad misfortunes, but since their total ruin, some of these poor creatures have set up their carriages.

MARTHA. Ah, Master Walter, if you had not so sadly—

WALTER. Wasted my youth and opportunities—I know what you are going to say—the old story! Yours, I know, is the general opinion; but, it is not mine, and opinions are free, as various. At college I never studied, I am perfectly aware of it—but I read Cornelius Agrippa, and Paracelsus, which greatly added to the natural exaltation of my ideas; so much for literature; later, I frequented the opera, revelled in the ballet—oh! how those charming girls danced and flew about.

MARTHA. And so did your money.

WALTER. Having studied woman from the pit of the theatre, I came here in hopes to gather something from the ruins of our commercial failure; I found intimate friends, who, after having aided me to devour my paternal succession, shut their doors in my face; so much for the study of the human heart! Now, Martha, you see how much I have learned; of what have you to complain?

MARTHA. That you will do nothing to better your present condition—why did you refuse to write to your uncle, who formerly inhabited this town, and who was so rich?

WALTER. (*quickly*) Martha, I have forbidden you to pronounce his name in my presence—he, the honest merchant, with his falsified accounts, ruined my poor father. Besides, if I had written, as he happens to be dead, I don't think I should have received an answer.

MARTHA. You should have applied to his steward—Herr Moritz.

WALTER. No, no; when I was a youngster, the sly rascal was always amusing himself at my expense—but I am not to be tricked by him now, I promise you.

MARTHA. Well then, your young cousin, with whom, in your early days you were reared, and who is, according to all report, so full of tricks and mischief; and yet possesses a good and generous heart; she was anxious to

repair the wrong done by her father—it was even proposed to you that you should marry her; she has made every attempt to approach you, and you have always refused.

WALTER. Yes; and for two reasons; the first, that I am, as I have already told you, a misanthrope——

MARTHA. And the second?

WALTER. I shall not tell you that.

MARTHA. Then it is all the same as if you had but one.

WALTER. My second reason is the strongest; it is, that in my heart I have a passion for——

MARTHA. For some young girl?

WALTER. (*moodily*) No.

MARTHA. A widow then?

WALTER. No.

MARTHA. Gracious—a married woman!

WALTER. (*shouting*) No! (*mysteriously*) you must never know—nor you, nor any living being—in fact, I am not quite sure that I know myself.

MARTHA. It is then something very terrible!

WALTER. As terrible, Martha, as though I had fallen in love with you—you see, I place it in a point of view that you may thoroughly understand my terrible condition.

MARTHA. No, no, I cannot understand it!

WALTER. For all that, you are as wise as I am, for I cannot understand it myself.

MARTHA. Oh! poor young man—he has lost his senses!

WALTER. (*coldly*) Leave me, Martha, that I may nourish my reveries and my melancholy.

MARTHA. (*bringing a basket from back*) Yes, you require some nourishment, that is it.

WALTER. Ah! precisely—what have you for breakfast?

MARTHA. (*coming down* L.) Alas! nothing.

WALTER. (R.) For both of us?

MARTHA. Yes.

WALTER. That will do (*sentimentally*) only take care that poor Minnie has the best part of it.

MARTHA. What?

WALTER. I am sustained by my philosophical ideas—but, Minnie, poor thing! *she* requires more savoury and substantial food.

MARTHA. (*aside*) I must go directly and sell the poor cat—we have supported her so long that it is now her duty to return the compliment. (*Exit* L. D.

WALTER. (*in a mournful reverie*) A love I dare not avow, is it not a criminal love? no, it is not a crime; it is but a passion; and, when I say a passion, it is not a passion. It

is an idea, a simple idea; and I call it an idea only because it is necessary it should have a name, for without a name, it would be nothing; see now, unhappy young man, to what you have been driven by your hatred of the human race, you are become an idealist, a maniac, and have but one definition of yourself to give—that you are the greatest idiot alive! yes, I am; nothing can justify me! and yet, I am not a greater fool than you, O Pygmalion, who adored a statue! Like you, I experience a wild and incomprehensible passion; like you, I burn, and burn without hope; like you, which is another reason, and as you so well say, O Cornelius Agrippa, O my master, if it were possible, if it were reasonable, it would not longer be a passion. (*approaching the bed*) she is there—how beautiful, how graceful! her little head resting on her pretty paw! little pet! little darling! (*dolorously*) she does not answer me! is she asleep? or—is she dead? Minnie, tit! tit! titty! Minnie—no,—no,—(*passing his hand over his head*)—she has done thus—and then—(*passing his hand over his mouth*)—thus; some one comes (*closing both curtains of bed.*) Oh! if I have been observed, it would need but that to compromise——

JOHN MORITZ *enters* L. D., (*disguised as* RAMBO SAMBO) *in Indian costume.*

A stranger! what a singular figure—and what a costume!

MORITZ. (*aside*) The same innocent countenance as formerly, and I think I shall as easily——(*aloud*) is it not to young Walter Thule I have the honour to speak?

WALTER. It is.

MORITZ. You will have no cause to repent my visit, O, my son, I am an Indian, as you may judge by my costume—your father had business transactions formerly with Indian merchants.

WALTER. (*aside*) I see, this fellow is in possession of some bills which have been dishonoured (*aloud.*) Sir, I have renounced all commerce with men, and especially with men engaged in commerce, so, if you expect me to pay any money——

MORITZ. (*giving purse*) No, I ask you to receive a hundred pounds.

WALTER. Oh! on such an occasion I have no objection to break through my rule.

MORITZ. From a debtor to your father, who wishes to remain unknown—he is, like myself, an Indian.

WALTER. This proves what I could never learn—that

money may be made to go a long way. I will place it in my strong box—(*throwing purse into coffer on table*) there is, you see, plenty of room for it,—and so, sir, you are an Indian?

MORITZ. Yes, my son; I was born in the kingdom of Cashmere; my father, a bonze of the third class, placed me in the temple of Condabar, with the great Goorooh of Cashmere.

WALTER. (*with great respect*) With the great Goorooh? He has seen the great Goorooh—(*kissing the sleeve of his robe*) you have seen the great Goorooh?

MORITZ. Very often; and since, I have travelled over the world practising the arts I acquired in my native country, crowds flocking to behold the marvellous feats of Rambo Sambo, the Indian juggler; and now arrived in this town, I shall devote myself to my favourite study, the transmigration of souls, that great work of Bramah.

WALTER. The transmigration of souls!

MORITZ. It is one of the dogmas of our belief; for you know, of course, what metempsychosis means?

WALTER. Know! certainly; when our existence has terminated, we then become, according to what have been our living virtues, or our defects, either bears, bulls, or partridges—a glorious honour and a profound dogma—a moral system, which causes us to love each animal as ourselves.

MORITZ. I was certain that so intelligent a youth as you are would believe in metempsychosis.

WALTER. Believe in it—of course I do! In the first place, as Doctor Krankwitz says, it does not follow because it is impossible, that it can't be.

MORITZ. It can be, it is. Why sir, I remember perfectly well the time when I was a camel.

WALTER. You were a camel?

MORITZ. For ten years, in Egypt—then a giraffe.

WALTER. Really! Well, I think I can see something of the giraffe about you now.

MORITZ. Probably! At any rate, merely by looking at you I can tell that you must have been a sheep.

WALTER. (*coolly*) Quite possible! I believe you are right, for, in the first place, I am very fond of mutton—the egotism of my former state still clinging to me, perhaps; and next, the facility with which I have always suffered myself to be fleeced! Ah, yes, now I think of it, since you are so learned, I have a favour to ask of you—a favour on which depends the happiness of my life.

MORITZ. Speak, my son.

WALTER. I have here a charming cat, a magnificent Angola.

MORITZ. I know it.

WALTER. Well, tell me, then, what do you think of her—what think you Minnie ought to become?

MORITZ. That is easy to see, by the spirit which sparkles in her eyes, the grace which animates her every movement. I should say, my dear son, that that cat-skin conceals a young girl, lovely and fascinating.

WALTER (*with great delight*) Ah, all is now explained, and the instinct of love was not a mere chimera. Learn that my heart had divined her metamorphosis, and that that young girl, so amiable, so graceful, I—oh! I love, adore her.

MORITZ. Can it be possible!

WALTER. There must be some means of restoring her to a human form. Reveal them to me—enable me to transform that cat into a woman, and I will owe you a debt of gratitude never to be repaid, oh, venerable Indian, or despair will overwhelm me!

MORITZ (*mysteriously*) It was not for nothing that I for ten long years resided with the great Goorooh—I penetrated many of his secrets, and have here an amulet whose virtue is infallible, and which at will can operate the transmigration of souls (*showing a ring*).

WALTER. Ah!

MORITZ. It needs but to rub it, while pronouncing three times the mystic words of "O! mi! hi!"

WALTER. (*eagerly*) Oh, my friend, my dear friend, give it to me, and accept all I possess, my life, my—no, not my life, for then——

MORITZ. It is a rare and precious talisman, and not for less than two hundred pounds——

WALTER. (*running to coffer*) Here are a hundred of them; they have not staid long with me, and for the rest I will give you my bill.

MORITZ. The ring is yours, O my son!

WALTER (*giving purse and taking ring*) Mine! oh, what happiness! what joy! (*moving towards the bed.*)

MORITZ. Beware, beware, O my son! Before the day is ended you may repent that you have used this talisman. Remember Goorooh's maxim, "Let every tub stand on its own bottom—do not disturb the world" (*to* WALTER, *who is showing him to the door*), and let every tub stand on its own bottom. (*Exit,* D. L.

WALTER. What said he, disturb not the world! I have no wish to disturb it—on the contrary, I wish to restore it to what it was, and that will not take me long. (*with affection*) Minnie, how droll, my heart beats—I almost fancy I am afraid. (*approaches the bed, starting back immediately—music piano, agitato.*)

Oh, mighty power of the Ganges,
You, who work so many changes;
She whom I so love is there,
Her presence to my sight declare—
O, mi, hi! O, mi, hi! O, mi, hi!

(*rubbing ring as he speaks—the curtains suddenly separate—crash in orchestra—a young girl, dressed in white, is seen lying on bed, asleep.*)

WALTER. (*retreating*) It is she! it is a woman!

MINNIE. (*awaking, rubbing her eyes, and passing her hand behind her head*) Where am I? what a droll sensation! (*sits up, then rises to her feet*) Oh! how tall I am! what a long way from the ground! (*walks fearfully a few steps, then stops, c., shakes her head, cat-like, then stretches her arms, touching them as if looking for the fur*) Gone—how strange.

WALTER. (*watching all her movements*) I fear now to approach, and know not how to address her. Absolutely the same physiognomy; but prettier though than she was just now. (*calling her*) Puss! puss!

MINNIE. Mew.

WALTER. Come, Minnie, Minnie!

MINNIE. It is my master calls me; it is Walter. (*offering her hand.*)

WALTER. She has not forgotten my name (*taking her hand*) Ah, I recognise her paw—heavens! how soft and velvety!

MINNIE. (*looking at him*) Oh, wonderful! I walk like him, I speak like him—a thousand new emotions are crowding here (*touching her head*) and here (*putting her hand to her heart*) Heavens! what is this I feel? how it beats. Walter, Walter, who and what am I? Oh!

WALTER. (*admiringly*) The prettiest girl in the world, Minnie—a real woman—at least I believe so.

MINNIE. I a woman? what happiness!

WALTER. Yes, we shall indeed be happy. All that you can wish for (*seeing that she is looking about*), speak, what would you? what is the first thing you desire?

MINNIE. A looking-glass!

WALTER. How! ah, of course (*going to table*) let me first secure my precious talisman (*places his ring in coffer, then brings forward a small looking-glass*).

MINNIE. Give me the glass, I am so anxious to know myself. (*looking*) Oh, how I am changed; (*fearfully looking behind and going round, as if looking for her tail*) No, no, it is not there. I quite like myself; but is it really myself that I behold, I can scarcely believe it!

WALTER. (*observing her*) Oh, woman, with you coquetry commences when you begin to live.

MINNIE. (*still looking in glass*) Yes, yes, it is me, it must be me—I recognize my features, although I never saw them before. (*turning towards* WALTER) I am pretty, am I not?

WALTER. (R. *folding his arms*) She asks me—me! (*with love*) charming!

MINNIE. (L.) That is just what I thought. But, at first sight, one is afraid of being mistaken.

WALTER. (*looking at her*) And all those charms are my work!

MINNIE (*placing looking-glass on table*) Ah, so much the better! Thank you. But, allow me to ask you, sir, why did you not make me a little taller?

WALTER. There's ambition (*putting his hand near the ground*) and just now you were no higher than that—already ideas of greatness.

MINNIE. (*standing on tiptoe*) Just so much more, that's all—it won't give you much trouble.

WALTER. I can do no more. It is not one of those works which can be retouched at pleasure.

MINNIE. Then you are very unkind.

WALTER. And you, if you are not satisfied, very difficult to please.

MINNIE (*smiling, and giving him her hand*) Ah, forgive me, I am ungrateful.

WALTER. Besides, why should you complain? are you not now what formerly you were?

MINNIE. No, I have never before been a woman—this is the very first time!

WALTER. Rubbish!

MINNIE. But, in revenge, I have been many other things. (WALTER *starts*) Yes, sir—and is it possible that you, yourself, do not remember what you have been?

WALTER. I believe that I have always been what now I am—an amiable and rather good-looking young man.

MINNIE. For myself, I cannot say precisely, but I have a

confused recollection—that long ago—very long ago—yes, I was a little wild flower growing in the fields, a little butter-cup.

WALTER. A little butter-cup, how pleasant! lawks a-daisy!

MINNIE. Not very; exposed always to the sun by day and cold winds by night, how could I remain fresh and pretty! And so, every day, I addressed a prayer to Bramah!

AIR: *from Beethoven.*

"Change, change me, Bramah!
Bramah!"
"Your wish I mark!"
Then answered Bramah;
And quick, oh, la!
To a little lark
I was changed—ah!

With body small and light,
Aloft I take my flight,
And roving far and long
With joyous song.
But a cruel man, he
Trapped one sad day poor me—
Then I fast in the net
Said with regret
"Change, change me, Bramah!
Bramah!"

Then, sight to see,
By mighty Bramah,
Quick as thought—ah!
I, into a bee
Was changed—ah!
Each day, full of pleasure—
Gathered at my leisure
From hyacinth and rose
Some new treasure;
But summer too soon goes
Then follow winter's snows;
My body chilled all o'er,
I cried, once more—
"Change, change me, Bramah!
Bramah!"

Grant me but that,
I would be warmer!
Then I to a
Nice young cat
Was quick changed—ah!
Everybody's fancy,
No nicer cat could be,
Little monies used to flee,
Cream for my tea.
But soon I saw with grief
Ev'ry cat was a thief,
For them I blushed, you see,
Cried, " Do change me—
Change, change me, Bramah!
Bramah!"
Only you can—
And then, oh, la!
As you're aware,
To a woman
I was changed—ah!

WALTER. Some one comes, no doubt my old housekeeper; she must not suspect your former condition.

MINNIE. Fear not my discretion.

WALTER. She can be discreet! and yet she was made by me!

MARTHA. (*entering* L. D. *a basket on her arm—aside*) The bargain is settled, I have sold her for half-a-sovereign: but, I shall never have the courage to—what do I behold! a woman here. (MINNIE *has gone behind* WALTER, R., *endeavouring to conceal herself from* MARTHA *who removes coffer from table.*)

WALTER. (C. *aside to* MINNIE.) Leave me to manage it, Minnie. (*aloud.*) This young lady, Martha, is the daughter of an old friend of my father's—she has but just arrived from—from Mesopotamia. (MARTHA *has placed the contents of basket on table.*)

MARTHA. (*looking at her*) From messy—where?

WALTER. Yes; as she was without a home, I have offered her one, she will stay with us

MARTHA. (L.) With us! (*depositing her basket.*) Well! that is news.

MINNIE. (*aside to* WALTER, R.) She has prepared breakfast, and there is cream; oh, I am so glad! (*licking her lips—* MARTHA *has taken the coffer into room,* R.)

MARTHA. I see what it is, sir; you are tired of my

services—and this, I dare say, is the passion you would not confess to me this morning.

WALTER. Exactly, 'tis, she (*aside*), she does not know how nicely she has hit it (*aloud*), yes, my dear Martha, it is the charming young creature whose elegant, graceful, and distinguished manners—oh! gracious! what is she doing there? (*he turns and sees* MINNIE *who has stealthily approached the table, jumped on to a chair, and is dipping her fingers in the cream and licking them after the manner of cats.*)

MARTHA. (L.) Goodness! do look at her young ladyship.

MINNIE. (C.) Oh! I am so fond of cream!

WALTER. (R.) My love, you must not (WALTER *signs to* MINNIE *to sit opposite to him—pours cream into her saucer, she begins to lap it, he checks her, and shows her how to drink it —she manages it very awkwardly.*) But what a breakfast! How have you contrived it—you who had no money?

MARTHA. (*behind table, pettishly*) How? It had to be managed somehow—I have sold our cat for five florins.

WALTER. What, without consulting me!

MARTHA. Yes, you won't want now to be bothered with cats. I have sold her to Herr Schnapps' cook, who will treat her kindly.

MINNIE. (L. *of table, aside, eating*) Sold me, that's comical!

MARTHA. Cook's young master's son took quite a fancy for poor Minnie.

MINNIE. (*aside*) And to a young man too! (*laps milk from her saucer*)

WALTER. (*signing to her*) Not as you used to do—not like that. (*aside*) She is not yet accustomed to sit at table. (*to* MARTHA) Well, if Schnapps has bought her, let him come and take her (*aside*) if he can recognize her.

MARTHA. (*down* L. *aside*) How quietly he takes it—what insensibility. But where is the poor thing got to, I wonder (*calling*) Minnie, Minnie!

MINNIE. (*rising quickly*) Mew!

MARTHA. (*turning round*) Eh! what was that?

WALTER. (*jumping up and signing to* MINNIE) Don't! (*to* MARTHA) you hear, she is close at hand.

MARTHA. In my work-basket, perhaps.

WALTER. (*resuming his breakfast*) Shouldn't wonder, look. (MARTHA *lets fall a ball of cotton from work-basket while looking in it for the cat*—MINNIE *steals from the table and commences to play with the cotton, pulling it to pieces, cat-like.*)

MARTHA. Heyday! heyday! what sort of manners do you

call these? (*snatching cotton from* MINNIE, *who spits at her like an angry cat*)

WALTER. (*to* MINNIE) My dear love!

MINNIE. (C. *tapping her foot*) What right has she to interfere when I am amusing myself?

WALTER (R.) Never mind her.

MINNIE. (*goes to cage and begins dabbing with her hands at the bird*) Oh! isn't he fat! (*upsets the cage which falls upon the table.*)

MARTHA. (*picking up cage*) Oh! my beautiful canary!

MINNIE. (C.) Isn't it annoying—I can't have any fun.

MARTHA. (L. *angrily*) A little minx of sixteen, who has had no experience.

MINNIE. (C. *imitating her*) An old woman of sixty, who has had a great deal too much.

MARTHA (*exasperated*) Oh! what impertinence! (*Exit* R.

WALTER. (*sitting* L. *of table*) Come here, Minnie; come here, young lady, why could not you let her bird alone? she is so fond of birds.

MINNIE. (L. *licking her lips,*) So am I—they are so nice and tender! (*taking his hand*) and I am sure you will not refuse me the first favour I have asked of you.

WALTER. (*aside*) Here's the velvet paw again.

MINNIE. Do send Martha away?

WALTER. Do you forget it was she who reared you?

MINNIE. No, but, I want her gone. (*passes her hand several times over her ear.*)

WALTER. (*observing her—aside*) We shall have a storm (*piqued*) You have not reflected on what you ask.

MINNIE. (*patting him gently with her hand*) Now do.

WALTER. (*with dignity*) Minnie, such a request—

MINNIE. You refuse? Then, I don't love you—Pht. (*spits and gives him a scratch on the hand.*)

WALTER. Oh! the traitress! (*aside*) I must give her a few lectures—or pare her nails (*aloud*) Minnie, see how you have scratched me!

MINNIE. (*sneaking away from him*) Serve you right, since you can so ill return the tenderness I have for you.

WALTER. (*shaking his hand*) Ah! you call that tenderness!

MINNIE. And can you doubt it? Oh! when I think of the caresses that I lavished on you, I blush—it was instinct, at least, I suppose so—but to day, that instinct has undergone its metamorphosis, and now, 'tis love.

WALTER. (*aside*) Oh! heaven—she loves me! (*resuming coldly.*) Excuse me, Minnie, I wish to believe that you love me; but, Minnie—as my cat, I could forgive you many

things which, were you my wife, I could not pardon: and if, with that charming figure, you have preserved the tastes and manners of your former state—

MINNIE. Wow! (*crying*) I will be more careful, will conquer the natural habits that displease you.

WALTER. (*kneeling to her*) And I, in return, promise to love none but you; to have, henceforth, no other will than yours, and to——

MINNIE. (*cocking her ear*) Shsh!

WALTER. Eh?

MINNIE. Didn't you hear it?

WALTER. Hear what? (*continuing*) Think what joy to be unceasingly occupied only for each other.

MINNIE. (*listening*) It's one of them!

WALTER. (*continuing*) And when I describe to you my love, my emotion, what pleasure to hear you say to me—

MINNIE. Hold your tongue—shsh! (*going quietly up.*)

WALTER. Where are you going?

MINNIE. I am sure there's one—didn't you hear?

WALTER. Sure there's one—one what? (MINNIE *creeps stealthily up to closet,* L. C., *then, cat-like, darts suddenly in*) what is it? Minnie, will you give over?

MINNIE. There, you have frightened the mouse away; shameful—and he was so plump!

WALTER. (*aside*) 'Tis no use—you fancy you are alone with her, and then you find there is company in the closet (*calling*) Minnie! Minnie!

MINNIE. Mew!

WALTER. Come here directly (MINNIE *runs forward*) what means this change in your soul? Yesterday, you were submissive—mild, had no will of your own.

MINNIE. Oh! but I am a woman now!

WALTER. Minnie, I shall never be able to present you in society: and when I go out, shall be obliged to leave you here in solitude.

MINNIE. What is the use of being a woman, if I am to be a slave? better had I remained as I was! for then I was free, was my own mistress, could go out and return over the tiles when I chose; and I mean that it shall always be so.

WALTER. And as your lord and master—what will become of my dignity?

MINNIE. You may put it in your pocket, and I intend to go out now, this very instant.

WALTER. (*quickly*) And I say you shall not! what means this rebellion to my wishes? shs—shs! (*drives her over to* R.)

MINNIE. Oh! but, you cannot stop me, and I will. (*running towards* D., *he hastens and places his back against it,* C.)

WALTER. Shs—shs! (*shutting door*) there, Minnie; now I have closed the door and you cannot get out.

MINNIE. (*plaintively*) Mew! (*runs up and jumps on to the bed.*)

WALTER. Where are you going, Minnie?

MINNIE. On the tiles—follow me if you dare! (*Music—jumps from bed on to window-sill, then on to roof and disappears—*WALTER *runs to window and puts his head out—speaking through piano music*) Minnie! Minnie! was there ever such an obstinate young puss! follow her, indeed! I am not used to that road, I will go on to the terrace, and try if—oh! poor Minnie! (*Exit* L. D.

MINNIE *looks in at window—music ceases.*

MINNIE. Yes, run after me, if you can. (*descends and comes forward*) I hope he may not fall. Oh! here is Martha.

MARTHA. (*entering* R. *dryly*) Master is not here?

MINNIE. (*looking towards roof*) No, he is gone to take a little air.

MARTHA. I am going to pack up my things, for I will not remain a second longer in this house, which I shall leave without a single regret, for I have recovered my poor Minnie, my only consolation.

MINNIE. (*quickly*) You have found her?

MARTHA. Yes, in a clothes press, locked in, and I should like to know who dared——

MINNIE. You must not bring her here.

MARTHA. I will—I am here to defend her.

MINNIE. No, to oblige me. Listen!

MARTHA. Abandon my dear Minnie (MINNIE *approaches and whispers in her ear*) Heavens! is it possible. (*respectfully*) How! you—really you?

MINNIE. (*looking around*) Hush! (*in a low tone*) Yes, solitude, grief, and the many magical, diabolical books that he has read, have turned my poor cousin's brain, for really Walter is half crazed.

MARTHA. But he has such a good heart.

MINNIE. And so, to repair the wrongs with which he had always reproached himself, my father, when dying, entreated that I would, if possible, be Walter's wife. But he has always refused to see me—and what is most humiliating, loves only his dear Minnie. He needs a lesson, and, if you will only second me, he shall receive it.

MARTHA. What must I do?

MINNIE. Quickly conceal Minnie, for should he see her all would be lost.

MARTHA. (*going towards* R.) I will carry her from the house.

MINNIE. Not just yet; I hear Walter returning.

MARTHA. Never fear, I know where to hide her, and presently I shall be able to carry her past him, and he not have the slightest notion. (*exit* R. *as* WALTER *enters* L. *and* MINNIE *conceals herself behind one of the curtains at back.*)

WALTER. Confound such travelling. As soon as I stepped on to the roof I slipped and rolled down into the gutter, and nearly over the parapet. (*sinking into a chair*). And poor Minnie, I could not see her—where is she now?

MINNIE. (*comes gently forward and sinks on both knees beside him*) Mew!

WALTER. Ah, here she is—she has returned. Poor little Minnie! Poor pussy! are you not very cold? (*patting her head.*)

MINNIE. Mew!

WALTER. Poor Minnie! (*taking her hands and warming them—and then smoothing her hair down—she rubs her head against his knee and purrs like a cat*) Ah, miss pussy, you will know better than go on the tiles another time, I hope.

MINNIE. (*still purring*) Then you are no longer angry with me?

WALTER. (*rising*) Well, I don't know. If you will promise never again——

MINNIE. I am now about to quit you never to return.

WALTER. Quit me—never to return?

MINNIE. For your sake, for I should render you unhappy—our dispositions are so very different.

WALTER. Well, at present, there does exist a slight incompatibility—but, after awhile——

MINNIE. Never! what's bred in the bone, you know! Remember, sir, I have been a cat—am now a woman, and those two natures combined—think what a terrible amalgamation!

AIR.—"*Oui, noir, mais pas si diable.*"

A cat's disposition's flighty—
A woman likes to roam—
Be advised therefore and slight me—
I could not stay at home—
Could never stay at home.
After a sweetheart,
When loth with her to part,
Men will fly like any dart;

But could you pass your life,
Running day and night to find your wife—
Day and night to find your wife?

By instinct I am led,
A scratching in the house,
And quick I'm out of bed,
And hunting for a mouse;
Else out of window and aloof.
Your blessings they would sound,
When long cold nights come round,
And snow was on the ground,
If to seek me, gentle youth,
You'd clamber shivering on the roof,
Clamb'ring, shiv'ring, on the roof.

WALTER. (*indignantly*) She is still sporting with me, I can see it, and thinks that I cannot live without her.

MINNIE. You will be compelled, for I have now a new master.

WALTER. A new master!

MINNIE. Yes; young Herr Schnapps, who bought me this morning of Martha; gave five florins for me.

WALTER. What is that I hear? Where have you seen him?

MINNIE. Here, just now; he came after Minnie, and I told him the whole truth.

WALTER. Oh, how imprudent.

MINNIE. And he said he should presently return and claim me.

WALTER. I don't care, right is on my side, I flatter myself; besides, he bought a cat, and to put him off with a young woman would be nothing better than a swindle.

MINNIE. I fancy he would like me quite as well as I am, and he is, really, a very good-looking young man, and much richer than you are—he would buy me beautiful dresses, and laces and diamonds.

WALTER. (*with jealousy*) And this is the gratitude you owe me for my love, for the favours I have heaped upon you.

MINNIE. (*maliciously*) I am sorry to prove ungrateful, but I am not to blame, it is my nature, and you have already agreed that 'tis impossible to change it; a cat, you know—

WALTER. But, to have acted so slyly!

MINNIE. The nature of the animal.

WALTER. To display such perfidy.

MINNIE. The nature of the animal.

WALTER. So like a weathercock!

MINNIE. Ah! that arises from bad example; because, men, you know——

WALTER. (*violently*) Go; I have at last attained to a perfect knowledge of your race, and find that cats are no better than the human species.

MINNIE. (*joyfully*) Ah, we have come to it at last. What! I appear no prettier to you now than formerly?

WALTER. Oh, yes, you do; and that is what enrages me; but, while looking on that pretty face I shall think always that there is a cat beneath it, and I see plainly that, without a miracle, I shall be unhappy all my life. But no! my rival shall not have you; spite of yourself, you shall remain here.

MINNIE. (*looking towards window*) You know very well that when I choose——

WALTER. (*running and seizing her hand*) Oh, but, I will take care that——(*seeing* MARTHA, *who enters* R., *the coffer under her arm*) Martha! close that window—make haste, when I order you.

MARTHA. (*placing coffer on table*) Well, I am going.

MINNIE. And I, Martha, order you not to do it. (MARTHA *stops immediately.*)

WALTER. (*to* MARTHA) Ah! how dare you—what does this mean? Answer.

MINNIE. (× C.) I forbid you, Martha, to say a word (*waving her hand*) and for better security take away your speech. (MARTHA, R., *several times opens her mouth without uttering a word.*)

WALTER. (L.) Heavens, she is dumb! another change, more inconceivable perhaps than all the others; all is over; I am no longer the master of my own house. Oh! you were right, great Indian sage, when you said to me this morning—do not disturb the world!

Enter MORITZ L. *he signing to* MINNIE, *comes forward,* L.

WALTER. Ah! mighty Rambo Sambo! only you can help me now; take her hence, where I may never see or hear her more.

MINNIE. (C.) Indian, I command you to remain where you are, without power to move a single step, or utter a single word (MORITZ *is immediately motionless—moving his jaws without the power to speak.*)

WALTER. (C.) Wonderful, another dummy!

MINNIE. These things are no trouble to me; (*to* WALTER)

and if you say another word, I will compel you to assume the form that I, this morning quitted.

WALTER. And she would transform me into a tom-cat! this is too bad! (*seeing coffer*) ah! my talisman! I had forgotten it! O Bramah! excellent Bramah! my first request to you was very stupid, and you, though not perhaps aware of it, were quite as stupid to grant it—but now, punish her ingratitude—give her back her former shape—(*opening coffer*)—and by the power of this talisman ah! (*a large white cat leaps out of the coffer and runs away.*)

MORITZ. (*shouting*) S'cat! s'cat!

MARTHA. (R. *calling*) Minnie, Minnie!

WALTER. (L. C.) How's this? you were there (*pointing to coffer*) and yet—you are here! what can it mean?

MINNIE. It means that there are two of us.

MARTHA. That *that cat* is your cat.

MINNIE. And that *this cat* is your cousin.

WALTER. (*quickly*) My cousin, my little cousin! then the hundred pounds, the, the——

MORITZ. All ordered by this young lady, and executed with punctuality and despatch by the celebrated Indian juggler Rambo Sambo, *alias* John Moritz, formerly steward to your late uncle.

MARTHA. (*to* WALTER) And you were never to be caught by him again, you know.

WALTER. And he told me he had been a camel!

MORITZ. And you were good enough to believe me.

WALTER. Good enough! fool enough, you mean. (MORITZ *nods*) But I am wiser now, I detest beasts, I detest myself; it is you only that I love. Yes, dear cousin, and if I but knew how to repair my errors——

MINNIE. By doing as I shall—forgetting them. At last, though not without trouble, I have accomplished my father's wish. I had against me a very formidable rival, that I shall no longer fear, for I shall always have for you the heart and tenderness of Minnie, without possessing her disposition, or her——(*raising her hand as if to scratch him.*)

WALTER. (*shrinking*) Ah!

MINNIE. (*smiling*) Oh! you may venture now, it is no longer dangerous; let who will change, *my* destiny now is fixed. (*taking* WALTER'S *hand—To audience*) If you are inclined to be severe, may I hope that I have yet power left to

Change frowns to smiles, is what we ask of you,
Rewarded by poor Minnie's grateful—mew!

MARTHA. (R.) MINNIE. WALTER. MORITZ. (L.)